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1991/11/07

Committee to Protect Journalists

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SENT BY FAX
November 7, 1991

The Honorable Richard Solomon
Assistant Secretart for East Asia and the Pacific
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Assistant Secretary Solomon:

For your information, attached is a copy of a letter
the Committee sent to Secretary of State Baker
earlier today.

Any assistance you can render in seeing that
Secretary Baker receives it while traveling would be
greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Allison Liu Jernow
Allison Liu Jernow
Asia Associate

fo VIP-Baker -
~~Affairs~~
Correspondence

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November 7, 1991

The Honorable James A. Baker III
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Baker,

The Committee to Protect Journalists welcomes your upcoming trip to China as an invaluable opportunity to raise human rights issues with China's leaders. Chief among these, we believe, is one of the foundations of American democracy--the right to freedom of expression.

Specifically, we would like to draw your attention to the plight of two Chinese journalists who are now serving thirteen-year prison sentences for their role in the pro-democracy movement. Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming, editor and publisher of the Economic Studies Weekly, have a long history of involvement in calls for economic reform and greater press freedom. They were arrested in October 1989 while trying to flee the country. During their trials, which critics decried as a mockery of justice, they were vilified as the "black hands" of Tian'anmen.

When news came this summer that both men were ill and held in solitary confinement, the outside world, including the U.S., was quick to protest the inhumane conditions of their detention. Beijing authorities at first refuted the charges, but later moved Mr. Wang to a prison hospital to receive medical treatment. This action shows that China will respond to strong international pressure.

Mr. Wang and Mr. Chen are only the most prominent of many Chinese journalists who are suffering under China's current conditions. For example, Dai Qing, an Enlightenment Daily reporter who was arrested after Tian'anmen Square, was prevented this fall from leaving the country to become a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. Renowned Shanghai author and

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journalist Wang Ruowang remains under surveillance and has had his phone line disconnected since last spring.

Although persecution of Chinese journalists is the most severe, foreign journalists also experience widespread and routine harassment. They report being under nearly constant surveillance, having their Chinese friends and sources threatened, and being denied access to most places outside of Beijing. Tibet and other regions of minority unrest are almost completely off-limits to the press. Furthermore, Chinese-language broadcasts of BBC and VOA are intermittently jammed, and Newsweek's September 23 issue on prison labor was banned.

We respectfully call these issues to your attention in the hope that you will raise them as a matter of official concern in China. The United States is recognized worldwide, and especially by proponents for democracy in China, for the protection of free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment. As such, the United States also bears a special responsibility to promote freedom of expression on their behalf.

We believe that several actions on your part could be extremely helpful in promoting press freedom in China. These include asking permission for embassy officials to visit political prisoners Mr. Wang and Mr. Chen, requesting that Ms. Dai be granted permission to take up her Nieman Fellowship, and expressing concern over the continued repression of free expression.

Thank you for your attention. We welcome your comments.

Sincerely,


Anne Nelson
Executive Director